DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 058 005 RE 003 950

AUTHOR Harrison, Raymond H.
TITLE The Use of Teacher Aides in Reading Instruction.
PUB DATE Nov 71
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the meeting of the California Reading Association, San Francisco, Cal., Nov. 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Paraprofessional School Personnel; Reading Development; *Reading Instruction; *Teacher Aides; Teacher Role; *Teaching Procedures

ABSTRACT

The conclusions of various studies on the use of paraprofessionals or teacher aides are presented. Although the studies produced little statistical data, logs and reports of numerous teachers and paraprofessionals were used as the basis for this paper. It is suggested that the role of the paraprofessional ultimately depends on his own background and experience, but that the specificity of teaching objectives of the principle teacher can help define the paraprofessional's role. That role can vary from assuming tasks which free the teacher to work directly with the students to working with the students himself. Specific areas and specific tasks within those areas in which the paraprofessional can work in teaching reading are suggested. These areas include helping develop the ability to sound out words, teaching listening skills, and helping improve reading speed by using games, drills, supervision of study, talking to the students about reading, and numerous other activities. The author predicts that the role of the paraprofessional will expand and change in the future. (AL)

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED 058005

ED 003 950

THE USE OF TEACHER AIDES IN READING INSTRUCTION

California Reading Conference, San Francisco
November, 1971

Dr. Raymond H. Harrison

One of the most dramatic areas of growth in education during the 1960's was that of the use of paraprofessionals. Though most of this growth was due to federal programs, the use of such personnel has been so successful that it has achieved a position of relatively high priority with respect to state and local expenditures. At the present time paraprofessionals are assuming a wide range of educational responsibilities and performing a wide variety of tasks. Only recently has there been more than perfunctory and sporadic effort to organize and systematize their work and to share the results of research and experience relative to their use.

Our concern here is with the use of aides in the classroom to improve performance in a specific area--namely reading. Closely related to the concept of placing teacher aides in the classroom to serve as paraprofessionals with teachers has been the idea of a new set of educational careers. Also, this level of performance has been looked upon by many as an entry level to the profession of teaching. Both of these are good and worthy considerations, but neither should overshadow the one most important and basic consideration--that of improving educational opportunities for children. The corollary objectives of providing new career opportunities and providing an additional entry level to the profession of teaching should not be allowed to assume even equal importance to that of providing better education for children. Priority must go to the latter, but this does not mean that "new careers" and new "entry level" concepts must be abandoned. New careers are emerging and these must

rest solidly upon educational purpose. Doubtlessly, many persons will also find that they have developed an interest in education as a result of aide experience and will, as many have already, continue or resume their education with a professional career in education in mind.

In addition to the use of paid aides in the schools, the practice of using volunteers in aide capacities in schools has become widespread, since those early years at Fairfield, Connecticut, resulting in the so-called "Yale-Fairfield Study of Elementary Teaching" which was concerned with volunteer service in schools. Like the Bay City, Michigan studies concerning the use of teacher aides, the Yale-Fairfield Studies were at that time concerned with "a continuing shortage of well-qualified teachers." It was hoped among other things to make elementary teaching more attractive by providing "relief from the multitudinous non-professional duties which have come to be part of the job."

The Bay City, Michigan Study for Better Utilization of Teacher Competencies, carried out during the latter part of the fifties involved crowded classrooms and was tainted with a strong hint of "bargain-basement" education, to the extent that when the opportunity came through the use of federal funds to experiment with the use of aides, the teaching profession in general was skeptical, and many individual teachers wanted nothing to do with their use. Talk of having classes 20 to 50% above the prevailing class size through the use of teacher aides in the classroom during the fifties stirred fears and apprehensions during the sixties when those earlier experiences were recalled. Fortunately, ~~most~~ many of those fears have been proven to be unfounded to this time.

Funds and encouragement from the federal government through the Office of Economic Opportunity and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act not only caused an upsurge of interest in and emphasis upon the use of aides in the classroom, but provided a more appropriate emphasis. The use of aides in the classroom was no longer to be an economy move or an attempt to overcome a real or imagined teacher shortage. The emphasis was placed upon the child and his welfare and there it remains for the most part.

"Classroom Aides," "Instructional Aides," "Teacher Aides," or "Paraprofessionals," whatever we wish to call them, are used to enhance the educational and life-chances of children and not to make life easier for the teachers. For this reason, we are probably making a mistake to call them "Teacher Aides." It is certainly not in the interest of their best and wisest use to emphasize the help that they give teachers. Officially, they are in California "Instructional Aides." Our best professional hope is that they serve in a paraprofessional capacity--that is, that they work alongside of a professional--the teacher.

Much of the early experience in Title I with the use of aides in the classroom could hardly be called experimental, since planning, careful organization, and effective evaluation were often absent or minimal.

However, as time passed and the obligation of evaluation became more widely accepted, a body of principles began to be established to guide future action and to suggest appropriate strategies of operation. We know now much more than we have ever known about the use of paraprofessionals in education. This knowledge, for the most part, is equally applicable to volunteer and paid aides.

The aide in the classroom working in a paraprofessional capacity serves children both directly and indirectly. However, if the question arises as to whether aides should work directly with children or indirectly, thereby permitting the teacher to work directly with them, the answer should be obvious. The teacher with his special professional knowledge and skills should be permitted to use that knowledge and those skills to the fullest extent possible. Whatever exceptions there may be to this general rule would be few and far between. This does not mean that the aide should not work directly with children. He will in many ways, and it has been generally true that the quality of aide performance has been directly and positively related to the extent to which he has been involved with children.

From the standpoint of academic instruction, aides have been found to serve best in the skills areas of language arts and arithmetic. More specifically, they have been found to be most useful in the skills getting and skills fixing areas, supplementing the work of the teacher in these areas and making it possible for the teacher to work more on skills using activities. The one area where they have served most and best has been that of reading readiness and reading improvement.

The aide in the classroom functions as an auxiliary to the teacher. He is in fact, when properly selected and trained, a technician who works with the professional or technologist. Whatever he does is with the sanction of the teacher and under the teacher's direction. The teacher, as always, is held accountable for the results or the lack of them. It cannot be otherwise.

Because of its importance, not only in its own right, but because of its importance to other areas as well, the language arts area, especially reading,

is an area of much concern in education--as we all know. Because of this importance and this concern and because of the complexity of the task of teaching in this area, aides have been used in the language arts [redacted] more than anywhere else in the curriculum.

Practically any worthwhile task an aide might perform which would assist either the pupil or the teacher would surely make its contribution to teaching and learning in the language arts area either directly or indirectly or both. However, let us be concerned primarily with the aide's direct contribution to the language arts program--specifically and finally with reading.

It is unnecessary, we are sure, to remind a group as sophisticated as this one of the long and arduous route to the final accomplishment of that complex set of skills we call "reading." Though there are some indications of prenatal considerations, such as dietary deficiencies and the like, we are willing to begin with the crib and the bassinet--and the eager mother trying hard to get the attention of her offspring. Certainly, a youngster must begin that long journey toward academic success or failure with his first breath. But it is with the school that we are concerned and with the aide's part in helping the harried, hurried and harassed teacher teach reading there.

In some of our first work with aides and with teachers who were using them, we found it necessary to keep calling attention to the general pattern of language development from listening and comprehension through speaking, reading, and writing. We found it necessary to keep emphasizing the point that it is futile to attempt to teach reading, as it is generally conceived, without an appropriate state of development in the language arts skills leading up to it. We found it necessary to keep repeating that an aide might

be making his most effective contribution to a given pupil at a given point in time by simply visiting with him. How well we remember one group of administrators and teachers in a city school system in this state that objected when we used the term "visit" in such a context as it is being used here. Several suggested that the word "counsel" might be a more respectable term to use. Paying someone to spend a part of his time visiting with kids simply didn't seem respectable to them. Yet, you and I know that through visiting with children about the things that interest them, they can be helped to improve their speaking and listening ability and be helped to see that there are adults who care about them. We are not going into the "self-concept" bit and its relationship to school success, though this is a significant consideration. We may have worked too hard at this in the wrong way in a number of instances. But the adult who visits with a child in an intelligent manner is helping him toward maturity. These things you know all too well, but you must keep telling and demonstrating to those who apparently do not. We learn to communicate by communicating and in no other way.

Assisting With Listening Skills

Normally, when we think about reading we begin with readiness, and when we think of readiness we very quickly get around to thinking about listening. However, our second thoughts generally reveal to us that listening as a receptive communication skill is closely related to speech and reading throughout our lives and that reading improvement at other than beginning levels is often contingent upon how well we practice the skill of listening. Remediation programs, as you well know, often begin with listening. Yet listening is the language arts skill that is least likely to be formalized

in the curriculum at all levels. It is the language arts skill most used by most people. It is the foundation of language arts we are sure, though there are some contradictions in research regarding the extent of its relationship to reading success.

Listening instruction should begin in the home, but as you well know, some home situations actually militate against listening. Children often come to school, not just in a state of unreadiness, but with a strong inclination not to listen. Many parents do not know of the importance of listening to their children, nor do all of them have the opportunity to listen to their children, despite the fact that there is ample evidence that poor listeners are generally poor readers and most parents would like to have their children read well.

The aide can provide another pair of ears for listening to children. He can also provide another sympathetic heart in the classroom and possess and use an understanding mind. He can teach children to listen by listening to them, and by helping the teacher give them something to listen to. He can provide them with reasons for listening.

In the first place, children listen to those things which bring them pleasure and in which they find satisfaction. They generally take their cues from adults and listen when listened to. All these things you know, but the aide must know them also. Any consideration of the matter of how best to use aides in any program must inevitably return to the basic premise that the teacher will need to help train or prepare that aide for the job that he is to do. A part of that preparation involves the <u>whys</u> and <u>hows</u> of listening.

Beginning aides often wonder why so much stress is put on listening. They will need to be helped to understand these relationships we are discussing. They will need to know that this is the place to start with most children, that that is why telling stories, reciting jingles and rhymes, and visiting with children are important. They will need to know that children generally take their cues from adults, that they will learn to listen by being listened to.

Discriminative listening must be practiced, and the aide can help with this practice. Teachers generally have a number of games in mind which can be used to help teach children how to listen discriminately. Other exercises such as "listening walks" and "listening moments" are well known to teachers. Aides have also read and told stories, had children use tape recorders to hear themselves, and helped to direct children's attention to the teacher or anyone else who was speaking.

Helping With Experience Background

Teacher aides need to know that the prime source of words is experience with reality. They need to understand that children acquire their vocabulary through experience--that the child who comes to school from a home which has been limited in its ability to provide a rich background of experience for him is at a distinct disadvantage. Knowing these things, they will be in a better position to help the teacher provide significant experiences to make up for those essential ones that he has missed. The judgment as to what these should be is a professional one, but the aide is often in a better position than the teacher to determine what his background has been. Strengthening the experience background of children also contributes to their ability

and desire to listen. In effect, it is the experience background that generally sets them up for listening. The aide must be alert to opportunities to enlarge and strengthen the experience background of children. This they must learn pretty much from the teachers with whom they work. The most significant aspects of children's language arts experiences relate to the models they imitate. This the teacher and the aide must never forget.

Many of the experiences we provide are for the purpose of providing usable vocabularies. In addition to being able to help children develop a usable vocabulary the aide can help develop a repertoire of concepts and skills. Himself a part of the learning environment of children, the aide can help the teacher offer a wide variety of activities and provide broad opportunities for participation in language-building activities as antecedents to and concomitants of learning to read. Most of the aides in the past have been employed to help teachers in situations where there were disadvantaged children. For too long we did not know very well how to use them. We probably overemphasized the importance of giving attention to these children--any kind of attention so long as it was pleasurable to them in far too many instances. We got from too many aides for too long a time that they were providing, as they put it, "tender loving care." But children who are having difficulties with learning to read, or any learning for that matter, need more than tender loving care. They need more than liberal sentiment--they need help. This means that what teachers know about what to do to help them overcome their deficiences needs to be implemented. This should come along <u>with</u> liberal doses of tender loving care, and not be displaced by it.

Our experience with teacher aides has covered a wide geographic area in this state. It has covered just as broad a spectrum of operation from

almost every standpoint. We have seen college graduates serving as aides and have observed persons with very limited background working in classrooms. We have evaluated and served as consultant to situations where there were 250 aides in one program and in those where there were a handful. We have devised and used check-lists, rating forms, diaries, and logs to evaluate the work of classroom or instructional aides. Out of the thousands of logs, diaries, check-lists and other such instruments that have come across our desk as we served in consultant relationships and worked on evaluations of programs involving now, thousands of aides, we find some strong hints that there are numbers of aides who are still not getting enough direction in their work.

We see the aide being properly used in a sense as a tool--a tool which gets better with effective use. The aide who plays word games with children or works on vocabulary exercises or helps children put on a puppet show should not only be helped to understand why this is being done, but should know enough about these activities to know how to get the very most benefit from them. It isn't just that these activities are being carried out, but that they are being carried out <u>with purpose</u>. Herein, we believe lies one of the greatest weaknesses of the aide program as we have seen it. There is often too much activity and too little purpose.

<u>Implementing Prescriptions</u>

It has taken us some time to reach this point, but we are now convinced that the most effective operation as far as the use of aides is concerned is one that emphasizes diagnosis and prescription in which the aide can make his contribution to the diagnosis for whatever it is worth, but the teacher does the diagnosing and the prescribing and the aide helps to implement prescriptions. This is probably being done more in reading than in any other single undertaking.

Literate and intelligent aides can learn how to perform most of the tasks inherent in the teaching of reading once the teacher has made the diagnosis and prescription. Whatever they do, of course, will be under the direction of the teacher. It is not professional treason to suggest that they be taught to perform most of the tasks involved in the teaching of communication arts and skills. Total communication takes place when an experience is completely shared, but in this case total communication is not absolutely essential for a relatively high degree of understanding. The teacher does not have to convey to the aide all that he knows about teaching reading, but should convey most of what is essential to understand the tasks that he asks him to perform. Though this is a heavy responsibility of the teacher, it is also an important responsibility of the aide to learn all that he can about the tasks he is permitted to perform. For this reason, we have generally advocated that selection of aides rely rather heavily upon evidence that the candidate for an aide position is a <u>learning</u> person. That he has potential for growth.

In directing the work of the aide in the reading program, the teacher should remind himself of the tendency of all good teachers to want to push on--to make progress--to see immediate results, and that this often has its effect upon the way we teach. It is in a sense a kind of impatience nurtured by our knowledge of the tragedy of the non-learner.

It was Dr. John Goodlad, I believe, who said that we who teach should "linger longer on the elementary." With our obsession to push on to higher and higher levels of achievement, we can find the assistance of an aide quite valuable in helping us to <u>linger longer on the elementary</u>; particularly with those children whose needs require that we sometimes linger very very long.

We are acquainted with some of the research regarding repetition--how much repetition is necessary for some children to learn a word or grasp a concept. We are also acquainted with many instances where aides have taken on a part of this burden with high positive increment to both themselves and the children with whom they worked.

A Strategy for Using Aides in Reading Instruction

Taking for granted that the best that is known about selection and orientation of aides or paraprofessionals has been observed, that teachers have the proper mindset for their best use, and that there is enough aide time provided the teacher, what then is a simple strategy for their use in reading instruction?

First, the teacher should have the objectives clarified in his own mind to the extent that he can delineate in a general way those things that require his attention and those that can be done by a capable paraprofessional under his direction. I believe we could move much faster in education if we could think generally in these terms, though I am not advocating that teaching is a series of acts which can be listed and categorized. Some teachers use aides in diagnosis. We have seen them using diagnostic instruments with children, but I am not sure that I would advocate such use in very many instances. The responsibility for diagnosis should rest with the professional and probably can best be met by the professional with whatever assistance he can get from the paraprofessional. Where elements of judgment are involved, that judgment should be that of the professional teacher in charge.

Our earlier experience with programs involving the use of aides convinced us that too little attention was being directed toward establishing day-to-day

working objectives which could be implemented through team effort. There generally was no dearth of objectives, but these ranged from the ridiculous to the sublime, had generally been stated by someone other than the teacher, and were often not very well known to the teacher.

So we are advocating that teachers of reading who are fortunate enough to be provided with instructional aides spend some time thinking about working objectives inherent in their programs; that they rethink these in terms of a team approach and that a system of evaluation be set up to determine on a continuing basis how well these are being met.

Our work for the past few years has led us to concentrate on evaluation, and much of that evaluation has been concerned with the effectiveness of numerous activities and approaches to the teaching of reading. In practically every instance aides have been involved. I wish to register at this moment an accumulation of disappointment concerning a general attitude toward evaluation. I am not talking about standardized testing. I am talking about the whole process of determining whether or not we are getting the job done. I am talking more specifically about finding out what works and what does not.

All of the logs of activities and diaries we have collected in our work would probably reach an astonishing height if piled together, but the lack of attention to the simple basics of evaluation has been more astonishing to us. Therefore, we are advocating that once the objectives have been established and simplified from an operational standpoint, the procedures for answering that universal human question of "How well are we doing?" become the next consideration.

The next consideration, of course, is that of methodology, or technique. If you did not know it in the beginning, you know by now that I am not a

reading expert. I have never claimed to be. I do claim some expertise in the use of paraprofessionals in the classroom. With respect to specific things they have been doing to help in reading instruction, we might review a few of these. These are not in any particular order.[1]

Development of Listening Skills; listening to children, directing listening exercises such as those prescribed in preceding pages, making tapes for children to listen to, asking questions, telling stories and asking children to repeat, explaining lessons, directing pupils' attention to the teacher or anyone else speaking to the class or group, playing listening games, and reading stories or other selections of high interest to them

Helping Develop Speech Fluency; playing word games, teaching correct word usage, encouraging children to speak in sentences, teaching English words to foreign-speaking children (Spanish, for example), working with Language Master, using tape recorders to improve speech patterns, using dramatizations, and helping with the language or listening center

Assisting with Spoken Vocabulary; visiting with children and encouraging them to carry on conversations, teaching them to say words correctly, making tapes of their conversations and playing them back to them, reading to them, telling them stories, teaching phonetic sounds, working with language kits with them, supervising show-and-tell, working with puppets, helping to associate pictures with words and pictures with sounds, and encouraging children to relate experiences

[1]Harrison, Raymond H., The Selection and Use of Teacher Aides. Fresno: G W School Supply Co., 1971.

Helping Develop the Ability to Sound out Words; playing word games, helping with dictionary exercises, drilling children on sounds that go to make up words, teaching letter combinations, teaching children to break words into syllables, using flash cards, listening to children read, pronouncing words correctly for them to provide a pattern, reading to a group or individual, and drilling on "sound-alike" words

Helping Children Recognize Words in Context; supervising vocabulary games, supervising study of word families, drilling on root words, drilling on prefixes and suffixes, directing children as they find substitutes for words in sentences, providing clues for new words, drilling children on the multiple use of many words, and supervising seatwork where children are asked to supply words in blanks to make sense or to change the meaning of a sentence

Helping with Oral Reading Comprehension; having children listen to a story and then tell about it, reading to children and having them answer questions about it, asking questions and having children read to find the answers, having children draw pictures about a story told or read to them, supervising the listening post, making tapes for the listening post, having children cut pictures from magazines to illustrate something in connection with a story told or read to them.

Helping Develop Fluency in Reading; drilling on phonetic sounds and letter combinations, using word and phrase flash cards to provide drill, reading with individuals, directing choral reading, playing word games, supervising the use of the controlled reader,

supervising the use of the Language Master, taping stories read by children, taping stories to be used in the listening post, supervising the listening post, listening to children read, reading to children, and supervising the use of programmed materials

Assisting with Oral Reading Speed; using flash cards with phrases and sentences, drilling on rapid word recognition, having children tape their reading and then listen to it (Children can operate a cassette recorder themselves with a minimum of instruction), giving practice in reading aloud, and checking on comprehension with teacher-made tests or check-sheets

Helping with Silent Reading Comprehension; assisting with word meaning, finding "alike words," finding "opposites," assisting with reading seatwork, helping with language arts seatwork, helping with social studies seatwork, supervising reading period, giving special help with word meaning to foreign-speaking or bilingual children, helping children study word derivations, helping study prefixes and suffixes, drilling on root words, drilling children on topical sentences and key words, following up reading with questions, asking questions and having children read for answers, giving comprehension tests prepared by the teacher or commercially prepared, and checking tests of comprehension

Helping with Silent Reading Speed; giving timed tests, giving drill exercises in speed reading, supervising the use of the

controlled reader, supervising silent reading contests, drilling children with phrase and sentence strips, helping children overcome lip movement, and giving timed reading tests under the direction of the teacher.

Helping Develop Interest in Reading in Class; making charts, using pictures of interesting things for discussion, reading part of a story and letting children finish, having children write sentences about things read to them or by them, reading selections, taking children to the library to make selections, making a reading bulletin board with the children, "advertising" an interesting book (This has been done with a "wall newspaper" prepared by the children under the direction of an aide.), listening to children read, encouraging children to talk about what they have read, showing genuine interest in reading

Developing Interest in Reading out of Class; pointing out interesting news items, introducing interesting stories, bringing in things for children to examine and read, taking children to the library and letting them read passages to see if they fit their vocabulary, halping make selections according to interest, suggesting good materials from the teacher's approved list, and encouraging children to bring interesting things to talk about and read about

Helping Improve Reading Performance in Other Subjects and Experiences; supervising study in other subjects, having reading lessons in textbooks (such as science and social studies), helping find topical

sentences and key words in the materials of other subjects, helping with dictionary exercises, supervising the making of a vocabulary list or glossary for science or other subjects, supervising simple library research in these subjects, and helping to find low-vocabulary high-interest materials for some to read.

We wish that we were able to tell you that we have good solid objective evidence that teacher aides have improved the teaching of reading. Unfortunately such evidence is scarce. We have been unable to collect any data from a situation where there were no other interventions. Concern for the progress of children which prompted the employment of aides has in every situation with which we have been connected, prompted other interventions. This is generally true throughout the country, though a few instances have been reported where fairly clean research data have been claimed and where the evidence is conclusive and favorable to the use of paraprofessionals in the teaching of reading.

What we do have is an overwhelming abundance of subjective judgment and professional opinion in support of the use of paraprofessionals. All over the country paraprofessionals are judged by teachers to be exceedingly helpful and worthy additions to the teaching-learning formula. This should be no secret to anyone in this group. We are sure that, for the most part, your experiences with paraprofessionals would prompt you to make the same testimony. However, such testimonies are not enough. We believe that the time is overdue for the introduction

of a more reliable evaluation strategy. We also feel that before this kind of evaluation can take place, some standard must be worked out. Otherwise we will be attempting to compare the incomparable. Another matter of concern to us that under no circumstance should an instructional aide, or paraprofessional, displace the time of a certificated teacher--not one minute of it! Supplement--yes, but not displace it. To the extent that we permit this to happen we are headed back to a time when it was believed that almost anyone could teach.

We have been guilty of assuring teachers that this would never happen. We have had to "eat crow" on that one. We are not sure how many times this has happened, but we know that one of the largest ten districts in the state is figuring teacher aides into staffing ratios on a trial basis in a few of its schools. We have made a lot of noise and expended a lot of energy trying to promote the use of paraprofessionals in the classroom to supplement teacher effort. We are unalterably opposed to any plan or program which takes us back to those experimental days at Bay City. With whatever energies we can muster we shall fight such a move.

Another matter concerning which we are somewhat schizophrenic is that of the use of volunteers to take the place of paid para-professionals. We do believe in parental or community involvement. This is absolutely essential as far as we are concerned. But we keep asking ourselves over and over if the ones that are volunteering

to help are the ones we need to make more contacts with. We keep wondering about their motivations for volunteering. We keep asking ourselves how one would tell a volunteer that he is in the way. We keep wondering how much devastation could be caused by a few disgruntled volunteers.

The answers seem to elude us.

Much of our operation with respect to aides or paraprofessionals has been backward. Too many times we have employed them and then decided what they had to offer and how we were going to use them. All this time we should have been determining how we could best use them and choosing them to fit the job description. We have plenty of leeway in this state. The professional judgment of the teacher is honored by statute. With a couple of reservations the judgment of the teacher reigns supreme in this matter. We feel that no greater compliment can be paid the professional teacher than this.

Another major concern is the way that aide time is so often splintered. It is obvious from what we have been saying, we are sure, that we have been alluding to a kind of situation where the paraprofessional is in the classroom long enough to actually be of help. If the time is extremely minimal, an aide cannot perform as a paraprofessional. We feel that perhaps they should not attempt to do so. A few minutes per day might be better spent doing chores for the teacher. Teachers have a lot of clerical and custodial work to do and assistance with this only is better than no assistance or poor assistance with other matters.

We would like still to cling to the notion that a new set of careers in education is emerging. We have had our belief that this is a sure thing shaken by some employment practices. It has not been the instances where principals' and program directors' wives and daughters have been employed that has given us the greatest jolt. It has been the increasing number of certificated teachers who have been employed as aides. We keep wondering if boards of education can get teachers that cheap, will we ever have more reasonable classroom loads for those hired as teachers. We suspect not.

We cannot blame anyone who is in need of a job for taking almost anything he can get. We are reasonably sure that we would do the same. But this does not keep us from being deeply concerned. We think it is bad for teaching and for the para-professional movement.

Paraprofessionals, or classroom aides, can help teachers directly or indirectly. What they are able to do depends a great deal on what their background is, what the teacher knows and believes about their use, and a number of other factors. Obviously, para-professional performance cannot be expected of everyone presently employed as an aide. We must, however, select, orient, and use aides who are capable of performing in that capacity.